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CHAPTER I.

LEO III AND THE ISAURIAN DYNASTY (717-802).

THE history of the Byzantine Empire under the rule of the Isaurian dynasty is one of the periods in the prolonged evolution of the monarchy least easy of comprehension. The work of the sovereigns usually called the Iconoclast Emperors has been, in fact, recorded for us practically only by opponents or victims, and their impassioned reports have obviously no claim to be considered strictly impartial. On the other hand, the writings defending and justifying the policy of the Emperors have nearly all disappeared in the fierce reaction which followed the defeat of the Iconoclasts, and we are thus but imperfectly acquainted with the real objects which the Isaurian Emperors set before themselves. Further, the true aspect of their rule has been completely obscured and distorted by the hatred and prejudice excited against them. The nature of their religious policy has been, and still is, frequently misconceived. In truth, the controversy as to images was only a part of the great work of political, social, and economic reconstruction undertaken by Leo III and Constantine V on the emergence of the Empire from the serious dangers which it had passed through in the seventh century. It would thus be a misunderstanding of the meaning and scope of this religious strife to consider it apart from the vast aggregate of which it merely forms a portion, just as it would be a wrong estimate of the Isaurian Emperors to find in them mere sectaries and heretics. The striking testimony rendered them by their very detractors at the Council of 787 should not be forgotten by any who undertake to relate their history. While severely condemning the religious policy of a Leo III or a Constantine V, the bishops assembled at Nicaea recall "their great deeds, the victories gained over enemies, the subjugation of barbarous nations," and further, "the solicitude they showed for their subjects, the wise measures they took, the constitutions they promulgated, their civil institutions, and the improvements effected by them in the cities." "Such," the Fathers in Council add, "is the true title of the dead Emperors to fame, that which secures to them the gratitude of all their subjects."¹

¹ Mansi, *Concilia*, XIII, 355.

I.

When on 25 March 717 Leo III was crowned by the Patriarch Germanus, the exterior circumstances of the monarchy were notably difficult. For ten years, thanks to the anarchy laying waste the Empire, the Arabs had been persistently advancing in Asia Minor; in 716 they laid siege to Amorium, in 717 they took Pergamus; and Maslamah, the most distinguished of their generals, who had pushed his way nearly into the Opsician theme, was, with his lieutenant Sulaimān, making ready for a great attack upon Constantinople itself. But the new Emperor was equal to defending the Empire. Of Asiatic origin, an Isaurian, according to Theophanes, but more probably descended from a family of Germanicea in Commagene, he had, since the time of Justinian II, displayed remarkable qualities in the shaping of his career. On a mission to the Caucasus he had shewn himself a wary diplomatist, and had given proofs also of energy, courage, presence of mind, and the power of disentangling himself from the most embarrassing situations. As strategus of the Anatolics since 713, he had held the Arabs in check with some success in Asia Minor, proving himself at once a good general and a skilful diplomatist; he was well acquainted with the Musulman world and perhaps even spoke Arabic. In short, eager as he was to vindicate the high ambitions he cherished, he appreciated order and was desirous of restoring strength and security to the Empire; a good organiser, a man of resolute will and autocratic temper, he had all the best qualities of a statesman. In the course of his reign of twenty-three years (717-740) he was to shew himself the renowned artificer of the re-organisation of the Empire.

Barely a few months from his accession the Arabs appeared before Constantinople, attacking it by land and sea (15 August 717). During the whole year which the siege lasted (August 717 to August 718) Leo III dealt firmly with every difficulty. He was as successful in stimulating the defection of a portion of the crews composed of Egyptian Christians serving in the Arab fleet as he was in prevailing on the Bulgars to intervene on behalf of the Byzantines. He shewed himself as well able to destroy the Musulman ships with Greek fire as to defeat the Caliph's armies on land and secure the re-victualling of the besieged city. When at last Maslamah decided upon retreat, he had lost, it is said, nearly 150,000 men, while from a storm which burst upon his fleet only ten vessels escaped. For Leo III this was a glorious opening to his reign, for Islām it was a disaster without precedent. The great onrush of Arab conquest was for many years broken off short in the East as it was to be in the West by the victory of Charles Martel at Poitiers (732). The founder of the Isaurian dynasty stood out as the saviour of the Empire, and pious Byzantines declared in the words of Theophanes "that God and the most blessed Virgin Theotokos ever protect the city of the Christian Empire, and that God does not forsake such as call upon Him faithfully."

In spite of this great success, which contributed powerfully to establish the new dynasty, the Arabs remained formidable. After some years respite, they again took the offensive in Asia Minor (726), and the struggle with them lasted until the end of the reign. However, the victory of Leo III and his son Constantine at Acroinon was a stern lesson to the Musulmans. The successes of the reign of Constantine V, facilitated by the internal quarrels which at that time disturbed the Empire of the Caliphs, were to crown these happy achievements, and to avert for many years the Arab danger which in the seventh century had so seriously threatened Constantinople¹.

The domestic administration of Leo III was no less fortunate in its consequences to the Empire.

After twenty years of anarchy and revolution the monarchy was left in a very distracted state. In 718, while the Arabs were besieging Constantinople, the strategus of Sicily, Sergius, proclaimed an Emperor in the West. In 720 the ex-Emperor Anastasius II, who was interned at Thessalonica, attempted, with the support of the Bulgars and the complicity of several high officials, to regain the throne. Both these movements were firmly suppressed. Meanwhile, Leo III was planning how he might give permanence to his dynasty. At the time of his accession, having no sons of his own, he had married his daughter Anne to Artavasdus, strategus of the Armeniac theme, and formerly his chief supporter in his revolt against Theodosius III, conferring on him the high rank of *curopalates*. When in December 718 a son, Constantine, was born to him, an even better prospect of length of days was opened to his house. By 25 March 720 Leo had secured the throne to the child, having him solemnly crowned by the Patriarch. Thus master of the situation, he was able to give himself up wholly to the great task, so urgently necessary, of reconstituting the State.

Above all things it was imperative to provide for the defence of the frontiers. Leo III set about this by completing and extending the system of *themes*. He cut off the Western part of the immense government of the Anatolics to form the Thracesian theme. He likewise divided the Maritime theme, in order to constitute the two governments of the Cibyrrhacots and the Dodecanese. The military reasons, which dictated the creation of provinces less extensive and more easily defended, were reinforced by political considerations. Leo III knew by his own experience how dangerous it was to leave too large stretches of territory in the hands of all-powerful strategi, and what temptations were thus offered them to revolt and lay claim to the Empire. For the same reasons Constantine V pursued his father's policy, reducing the area of the Opsician theme, and forming out of it the Bucellarian theme, and, perhaps, the Optimatian. Thus under the Isaurian Emperors was com-

¹ For the details of the Arab War, see *infra*, Chapter v (A), pp. 119-21.

pleted the administrative organisation sketched out in the seventh century. Leo III and his son made a point of nominating to be governors of these provinces men of worth, good generals and capable administrators, and, above all, devoted to the person and the policy of their master. The *Military Code* (*νόμος στρατιωτικός*), which probably dates from the reign of Leo III, was designed to provide these rulers with well-disciplined troops, and to secure the formation of an army with no care or interest apart from its work, and strictly forbidden to concern itself with agriculture or commerce. Out of this force Constantine V, by throwing into one body contingents drawn from every theme in the Empire, was to set himself to create a truly national army, ever more and more removed from the influence of local leaders and provincial patriotism.

If the administration and the army were to be re-organised, it was of the first necessity to restore order to the finances. At all costs, money must be found. To secure this, Leo III hit upon a highly ingenious expedient, known as doubling the indiction. The fiscal year from 1 September 726 to 1 September 727 was the tenth in the period of fifteen years called the indiction. The Emperor ordered that the following year, reckoning from 1 September 727 to 1 September 728, instead of being the eleventh year of the indiction, should be the twelfth, and consequently in one year he levied the taxes which should have been paid in two years¹. The Exchequer officials received orders to get in all contributions with rigorous exactness; and the Popes complained bitterly of the tyranny of the fiscal authority (725). In spite of this, new taxes were devised. In 732 Leo III increased the capitation tax, at least in the provinces of Sicily, Calabria, and Crete, and seized the revenues of the pontifical patrimonies in the south of Italy for the benefit of the treasury. Finally in 739, after the destructive earthquake in Constantinople, in order to rebuild the walls of the capital, he raised existing imposts by one twelfth (*i.e.* two *keratia* upon the *nomisma*, or golden *solidus*, which was worth twenty-four *keratia*, whence the name *Dikeraton* given to the new tax). Thus it was that the chroniclers of the eighth century accused Leo III of an unrestrained passion for money and a degrading appetite for gain. As a fact, his careful, often harsh, administration of the finances supplied the treasury with fresh resources.

Leo was at no less pains to restore economic prosperity to the Empire. The *Rural Code* (*νόμος γεωργικός*), which appears to date from this period, was an endeavour to restrain the disquieting extension of large estates, to put a stop to the disappearance of small free holdings, and to make the lot of the peasant more satisfactory. The immigration of numerous Slav tribes into the Balkan peninsula since the end of the sixth century had brought about important changes in the methods of land cultivation. The colonate, if it had not completely disappeared, at

¹ For the confusion caused by this in the chronology of part of the eighth century, see the note by Professor Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, II, 425.

any rate had ceased to be the almost universal condition. Instead were to be found peasants (the *μορτίται*) much less closely bound to the soil they cultivated than the former *adscriptitii*, and paying a fixed rent (*μορτή*) to the owner, or else communities of free peasants holding the land in collective ownership, and at liberty to divide it up among the members of the community in order to farm it profitably. The *Rural Code* gave legal sanction to existing conditions which had been slowly evolved: it witnesses to a genuine effort to revive agriculture and to restore security and prosperity to the husbandman; apparently this effort was by no means wasted, and the moral and material condition of the agricultural population was greatly improved. The *Maritime Code* (*νόμος ναυτικός*), on the other hand, encouraged the development of the mercantile marine by imposing part of the liability for unavoidable losses on the passengers, thus diminishing the risk of freight-owner and captain.

Finally, an important legislative reform brought the old laws of Justinian up to date in relation to civil causes; namely, the publication of the code promulgated in 739 and known as the *Ecloga*. In the preface to the *Ecloga* Leo III has plainly pointed out the object aimed at in his reform; he intended at once to give more precision and clearness to the law, and to secure that justice should be better administered, but, above all, he had at heart the introduction of a new spirit into the law, more humane—the very title expressly mentions this development (*εἰς τὸ φιλανθρωπότερον*)—and more in harmony with Christian conceptions. These tendencies are very clearly marked in the provisions, much more liberal than those in Justinian's code, of the laws dealing with the family and with questions of marriage and inheritance. In this code we are sensible that there is at once a desire to raise the intellectual and moral standard of the people, and also a spirit of equal justice, shewn by the fact that henceforth the law, alike for all, takes no account of social categories¹. And there is no better proof than the *Ecloga* of the vastness of the projects of reform contemplated by the Iconoclast Emperors and of the high conception they had formed of their duty as rulers.

Leo III's work of administrative re-organisation was crowned by a bold attempt at religious and social reform. Thence was to arise the serious conflict known as the *Iconoclastic struggle*, which for more than a century and a half was profoundly to disturb the interior peace of the Empire, and abroad was to involve the breach with Rome and the loss of Italy.

The long struggle of the seventh century had brought about far-reaching changes in the ideas and morals of Byzantine society. The influence of religion, all-powerful in this community, had produced results

¹ Cf. on the laws established by the *Ecloga*, *infra*, Chapter xxii, pp. 708-10.

formidable from the moral point of view. Superstition had made alarming progress. Everybody believed in the supernatural and the marvellous. Cities looked for their safety much less to men's exertions than to the miraculous intervention of the patron saint who watched over them, to St Demetrius at Thessalonica, St Andrew at Patras, or the Mother of God at Constantinople. Individuals put faith in the prophecies of wizards, and Leo III himself, like Leontius or Philippicus, had been met in the way by one who had said to him: "Thou shalt be King." Miracle seemed so natural a thing that even the Councils used the possibility of it as an argument. But, above all, the *cultus* offered to images, and the belief in their miraculous virtues, had come to occupy a surprisingly and scandalously large place in the minds of the Byzantines. Among the populace, largely Greek by race, and in many cases only superficially Christianised, it seemed as though a positive return to pagan customs were in process.

From early times, Christianity in decorating its churches had made great use of pictures, looking upon them as a means of teaching, and as matter of edification for the faithful. And early too, with the encouragement of the Church, the faithful had bestowed on pictures, especially on those believed to have been "not made by human hands" (*ἀχειροποίητοι*), veneration and worship. In the eighth century this devotion was more general than ever. Everywhere, not merely in the churches and monasteries, but in houses and in shops, on furniture, on clothes, and on trinkets were placed the images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints. On these cherished icons the marks of respect and adoration were lavished: the people prostrated themselves before them, they lighted lamps and candles in front of them, they adorned them with ribbons and garlands, burned incense, and kissed them devoutly. Oaths were taken upon images, and hymns were sung in their honour; miracles, prodigies, and marvellous cures were implored and expected of them; and so absolute was the trust in their protection that they were sometimes chosen as sponsors for children. It is true that, in justification of these aberrations, theologians were accustomed to explain that the saint was mystically present in his material image, and that the respect shewn to the image penetrated to the original which it represented. The populace no longer drew this distinction. To them the images seemed real persons, and Byzantine history is full of pious legends, in which images speak, act, and move about like divine and supernatural beings. Everybody was convinced that by a mystic virtue the all-powerful images brought healing to the soul as well as to the body, that they stilled tempests, put evil spirits to flight, and warded off diseases, and that to pay them the honour due to them was a sure means of obtaining all blessings in this life and eternal glory in the next.

Many devout minds, however, were hurt and scandalised by the excesses practised in the cult of images. As early as the fifth and sixth centuries, Fathers of the Church and Bishops had seen with indignation

the Divine Persons thus represented, and had not hesitated to urge the destruction of these Christian idols. This iconoclastic tendency had grown still more powerful towards the end of the seventh century, especially in the Asiatic provinces of the Empire. The Paulicians, whose heresy had spread rapidly in Asia Minor during the second half of the seventh century, proscribed images, and were opposed to the adoration of the Cross, to the cult of the Virgin and the Saints, and to everything which was not "worship in spirit and in truth." The Messalians of Armenia also rejected image-worship, and the clergy of that province had succeeded in gradually purifying popular religion there. It must by no means be forgotten that the Jews, who were very numerous in Christendom, and at this time shewed great zeal in proselytising, were naturally hostile to images, and that the Musulmans condemned them no less rigorously, seeing in the devotion paid to them an actual revival of polytheism. Leo III himself, Asiatic in origin and subjected from childhood to the influence of an iconoclastic atmosphere, would as a matter of course sympathise with this opposition to images. Like many Asiatics, and like a section even of the superior clergy of the orthodox party, he seems to have been alarmed by the increase of idolatry among the people, and to have resolved on a serious effort to restore to Christianity its primitive loftiness and purity.

Mistakes have often been made about the character of the religious policy of the Isaurian Emperors, and its end and scope have been somewhat imperfectly understood. If faith is to be reposed in contemporaries, very hostile, be it said, to Leo III, the Emperor was actuated by strangely petty motives. If Theophanes is to be trusted, he was desirous of pleasing the Musulmans with whom he was in close intellectual agreement (*σαρακηνόφρων*), and the Jews, to whom he had, as was related, promised satisfaction on this head if ever the predictions which bade him expect the throne should be realised. These are mere legends; it would be difficult to believe that a prince who had just won so resounding a victory over Islām should have been so anxious to spare the feelings of his adversaries, and that a ruler who in 722 promulgated an edict of persecution against the Jews should have been so much affected by their views.

The historians of our day have credited the iconoclasts with other intentions, and have attributed a much wider scope to their policy. They have seen in them the champions of the lay power, the opponents of the interference of the Church with the affairs of the State. They have represented them as rationalists who, many centuries before Luther, attempted the reformation of the Church, as freethinkers, aspiring to found a new society on "the immortal principles" destined to triumph in the French Revolution. These are strange errors. Leo III and his son were men of their time, sincerely pious, convinced believers, even theologians, very anxious, in accordance with the ideas of the age, to cast out every-

thing which might bring down the Divine anger upon the Empire, very eager, in sympathy with the feelings of a section of their people and their clergy, to purify religion from what seemed to them idolatry.

But they were also statesmen, deeply concerned for the greatness and the safety of the Empire. Now the continuous growth of monasticism in Byzantine society had already produced grave results for the State. The immunity from taxation enjoyed by Church lands, which every day became more extensive, cut down the receipts of the Treasury; the ever-increasing numbers who entered the cloister withdrew soldiers from the army, officials from the public services, and husbandmen from agriculture, while it deprived the nation of its vital forces. The monks were a formidable element of unrest owing to the influence they exercised over souls, which often found its opportunities in image-worship, many convents depending for subsistence on the miraculous icons they possessed. Unquestionably, one of the objects which the Iconoclast Emperors set before themselves was to struggle against this disquieting state of things, to diminish the influence which the monks exercised in virtue of their control of the nation's education and their moral guidance of souls. In proscribing images they aimed also at the monks, and in this way the religious reform is intimately connected with the great task of social rebuilding which the Isaurian Emperors undertook.

It is true that by entering on the struggle which they thus inaugurated the iconoclast sovereigns ushered in a long period of unrest for the monarchy; that out of this conflict very serious political consequences arose. It would, nevertheless, be unjust to see in the resolution to which they came no more than a caprice of reckless and fanatical despots. Behind Leo III and his son, and ready to uphold them, stood a whole powerful party of iconoclasts. Its real strength was in the Asiatic population and the army, which was largely made up of Asiatic elements, notably of Armenians. Even among the higher clergy, secretly jealous of the power of the monks, many bishops, Constantine of Nacolea, Thomas of Claudiopolis, Theodosius of Ephesus, and, later on, Constantine of Nicomedia and Sisinnius of Perge, resolutely espoused the imperial policy, and among the Court circle and the officials high in the administration many, less perhaps from conviction than from fear or from self-interest, did likewise, although among these classes several are to be found laying down their lives for their attachment to images. And even among the people of Constantinople a violent hostility to monks shewed itself at times. But in the opposite camp the Isaurian Emperors found that they had to reckon with formidable forces, nearly the whole of the European part of the Empire: the monks, who depended upon images and were interested in maintaining the reverence paid them; the Popes, the traditional and passionate champions of orthodoxy; the women, bolder and more fervent than any in the battle for the holy icons, whose vigorous efforts and powerful influence cannot be too

strongly emphasised; and, finally, the masses, the crowd, instinctively faithful to time-honoured religious forms, and instinctively opposed to the upper classes and ready to resist all change. These elements of resistance formed the majority in the Empire, and upon their tenacious opposition, heightened by unwearying polemics, the attempted reforms were finally to be wrecked.

Leo III was too capable a statesman and too well aware of the serious consequences, which, in the Byzantine Empire, any innovation in religion would involve, not to have hesitated long before entering upon the conflict. His course was decided by an incident which shews how thoroughly he was a man of his time. In 726 a dangerous volcanic eruption took place between Thera and Therasia, in which phenomenon the Emperor discerned a token of the wrath of God falling heavily upon the monarchy. He concluded that the only means of propitiation would be to cleanse religion finally from practices which dishonoured it. He resolved upon the promulgation of the edict against images (726).

It has sometimes been thought, on the strength of a misunderstood passage in the life of St Stephen the Younger, that the Emperor ordered, not that the pictures should be destroyed, but that they should be hung higher up, in order to withdraw them from the adoration of the faithful. But facts make it certain that the measures taken were very much more rigorous. Thus keen excitement was aroused in the capital and throughout the Empire. At Constantinople, when the people saw an officer, in the execution of the imperial order, proceed to destroy the image of Christ placed above the entrance to the Sacred Palace, they broke out into a riot, in which several were killed and injured, and severe sentences necessarily followed. When the news spread into the provinces worse things happened. Greece and the Cyclades rose and proclaimed a rival Emperor, who, with the support of Agallianus, turmarch of the Helladics, marched upon Constantinople, but the rebel fleet was easily destroyed by the imperial squadrons. In the West results were more important. Pope Gregory II was already, owing to his opposition to the fiscal policy of Leo III, on very bad terms with the Government. When the edict against images arrived in Italy, there was a universal rising in the peninsula in favour of the Pope, who had boldly countered the imperial order by excommunicating the exarch and denouncing the heresy (727). Venice, Ravenna, the Pentapolis, Rome, and the Campania rose in revolt, massacred or drove out the imperial officers, and proclaimed new dukes; indeed, matters went so far that the help of the Lombards was invoked, and a plan was mooted of choosing a new Emperor to be installed at Constantinople in the place of Leo III. The Emperor took energetic measures against the insurgents. The new exarch Eutychius, who received orders to put down the resistance at all costs, marched upon Rome (729) but did not succeed in taking it.

And it may be that imperial rule in Italy would now have come to an end had not Gregory II, like the prudent politician that he was, discerned the danger likely to arise from the intervention of the Lombards in Italian affairs and used his influence to bring back the revolted provinces to their allegiance. Thus peace was restored and Italy conciliated, her action being limited to a respectful request that the honour due to images should again be paid to them¹.

Meanwhile opposition was growing in the East. The clergy, with Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, at their head, had naturally condemned the imperial policy openly. Leo III determined on breaking down resistance by force. The Church schools were closed, and a later legend even relates that the Emperor burned the most famous of them, along with its library and its professors. In January 730 he caused the deposition of the Patriarch Germanus, who refused to condemn images, and in his place he had the Syncellus Anastasius elected, a man wholly devoted to the iconoclast doctrine. This caused fresh disturbances in the West. Gregory II refused to recognise the heretical Patriarch. Gregory III, who succeeded in 731, relying on the Lombards, assumed an even bolder and more independent attitude. The Roman Synod of 731 solemnly excluded from the Church those who opposed images. This was to go too far. The Emperor, who now saw in Gregory merely a rebel, sent an expedition to Italy with the task of reducing him to obedience; the Byzantine fleet, however, was destroyed by a tempest in the Adriatic (732). Leo III was obliged to content himself with seizing the Petrine patrimonies within the limits of the Empire, with detaching from the Roman obedience and placing under the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople the dioceses of Calabria, Sicily, Crete, and Illyrium, and with imposing fresh taxes on the Italian population. The breach between the Empire and Italy seemed to be complete; in 738 Gregory III was to make a definite appeal to Charles Martel.

Even outside the Empire orthodox resistance to the iconoclast policy was becoming apparent. St John Damascene, a monk of the Laura of St Sabas in Palestine, wrote between 726 and 737 three treatises against "those who depreciate the holy images," in which he stated dogmatically the principles underlying the cult of icons, and did not hesitate to declare that "to legislate in ecclesiastical matters did not pertain to the Emperor" (*οὐ βασιλέων ἐστὶ νομοθετεῖν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*). Legend relates that Leo III, to avenge himself on John, had him accused of treason to the Caliph, his master, who caused his right hand to be cut off, and it adds that the next night, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the hand was miraculously restored to the mutilated arm, that it might continue its glorious labours in defence of orthodoxy.

In reality, despite certain harsh acts, dictated for the most part by political necessity, it seems plain that the edict of 726 was enforced with

¹ Cf. Vol. II, Chapter VIII A.

great moderation. Most of the churches and the Patriarch's palace were still, at the end of the reign, in undisturbed possession of the frescoes and mosaics which adorned them. Against persons there was no systematic persecution. Even the chronicler Theophanes, who cannot sufficiently reprobate "the impious Leo," acknowledges that the deposed Patriarch, Germanus, withdrew to his hereditary property of Platonion and there peacefully ended his days. If his writings were burnt by the Emperor's orders, he himself was never, as legend claims, subjected to measures of violence. The rising in Greece was suppressed with great mildness, only the two leaders being condemned to death. Finally, the *Ecloga*, promulgated in 740, inflicted no punishment on iconodules. Nevertheless, when Leo died in 740, a serious struggle had been entered on, which was to become fatally embittered as much by the very heat of the combat and the desperate resistance of the monks as by the formidable problems which it was soon to raise. In the quarrel over images the real collision was between the authority of the Emperor in religious matters and the desire of the Church to free herself from the tutelage of the State. This became unmistakable when Constantine V succeeded his father.

II.

Constantine V (740-775) has been fiercely attacked by the iconodule party. They surnamed him "the Stable-boy" (καβάλλινος) and "Copronymus" (named from dung), on account of an unlucky accident which, they said, had occurred at his christening. They accused him of nameless debaucheries, of vices against nature, and attributed to him every kind of infamy. "On the death of Leo," says the deacon Stephen, "Satan raised up in his stead a still more abandoned being, even as to Ahab succeeded Ahaziah, and to Archelaus Herod, more wicked than he." In the eyes of Nicephorus he outdid in cruelty those tyrants who have most tormented the human race. For Theophanes he is "a monster athirst for blood," "a ferocious beast," an "unclean and bloodstained magician taking pleasure in evoking demons," in a word "a man given up from childhood to all that is soul-destroying," an amalgam of all the vices, "a precursor of Antichrist."

It would be childish to take these senseless calumnies literally. In fact, if we consider the events of his reign, Constantine V appears as an able and energetic ruler, a great warrior and a great administrator, who left behind him a glorious and lasting reputation. He was the idol of the army, which long remembered him and many years after his death was still the determined champion of his life-work. He was, in the eyes of the people, "the victorious and prophetic Emperor," to whose tomb in 813 they crowded, in order to implore the dead Caesar to save the city which was threatened by the Bulgars. And all believed themselves to have seen the prince come forth from his tomb, mounted on his war-

horse and ready once more to lead out his legions against the enemy. These are not facts to be lightly passed over. Most certainly Constantine V was, even more than his father, autocratic, violent, passionate, harsh, and often terrifying. But his reign, however disturbed by the quarrel concerning images, appears, none the less, a great reign, in which religious policy, as under Leo III, merely formed part of a much more important achievement.

It must be added that the early occurrences of the reign were by no means such as to incline the new prince to deal gently with his opponents. In 741 the insurrection of his brother-in-law Artavasdus united the whole orthodox party against Constantine V. The Emperor had just left Constantinople to open a campaign against the Arabs; while the usurper was making an unlooked-for attack on him in Asia, treason in his rear was handing over the capital to his rival, the Patriarch Anastasius himself declaring against him as suspected of heretical opinions. A year and a half was needed to crush the rebel. Supported by Asia, which, with the exception of the Opsician theme where Artavasdus had been strategus, ranged itself unanimously on the side of Constantine, the rightful Emperor defeated his competitor at Sardis (May 742) and at Modrina (August 742) and drove him back upon Constantinople, to which city he laid siege. On 2 November 742 it was taken by storm. Artavasdus and his sons were blinded; the Patriarch Anastasius was ignominiously paraded round the Hippodrome, mounted on an ass and exposed to the mockery of the crowd; Constantine, however, maintained him in the patriarchal dignity. But we may well conceive that the Emperor felt considerable rancour against his opponents, and continually distrusted them after events which so plainly shewed the hatred borne him by the supporters of images.

Yet Constantine shewed no haste to enter upon his religious reforms. More pressing matters demanded his attention. As with Leo III, the security of the Empire formed his chief preoccupation. Profiting by the dissensions which shook the Arab Empire, he assumed the offensive in Syria (745), reconquered Cyprus (746), and made himself master of Theodosiopolis and Melitene (751). Such was his military reputation that in 757 the Arabs retreated at the bare rumour of his approach. To the end of the reign the infidels were bridled without the necessity for any further personal intervention of Constantine.

The Bulgars presented a more formidable danger to the Empire. In 755 Constantine began a war against them which ended only with his life. In nine successive campaigns he inflicted such disastrous defeats on these barbarians, at Marcellae (759) and at Anchialus (762), that by 764 they were terror-stricken, made no attempt at resistance, and accepted peace for a term of seven years (765). When in 772 the struggle was renewed, its results proved not less favourable; the Emperor,

having won the victory of Lithosoria, re-entered Constantinople in triumph. To the last day of his life, Constantine wrestled with the Bulgars, and if he did not succeed in destroying their kingdom, at least he restored the prestige of Byzantine arms in the Balkan Peninsula¹. Elsewhere he repressed the risings of the Slavs of Thrace and Macedonia (758), and, after the example of Justinian II, he deported part of their tribes into Asia, to the Opsician theme (762).

At home also, Constantine gloriously carried on the work of his father. We have already seen how he continued and completed the administrative and military organisation set on foot by Leo III; he bestowed equal care on restoring the finances of the Empire, and his adversaries accuse him of having been a terrible and merciless exactor, a hateful oppressor of the peasants, rigorously compelling the payment of constantly increasing taxes. In any case, at this cost was secured the excellent condition in which he certainly left the imperial finances (Theophanes speaks of the vast accumulations which his son, on his death, found in the treasury). Also, despite the havoc caused by the great pestilence of 747, the Empire was prosperous. The brilliancy of the Court, the splendour of buildings—for Constantine V, while battling against images, encouraged the production of secular works of art intended to replace them—are a proof of this prosperity. And the Emperor, who from as early as 750 had shared the throne with his son Leo, and who in 768, in order to increase the stability of his house, had associated his four other sons in the imperial power with the titles of Caesar and Nobilissimus, might flatter himself that he had secured the Isaurian dynasty unshakably in the imperial purple, and restored to the Empire security, cohesion, and strength.

Constantine V had no hesitation, in order to complete his work, in re-opening the religious struggle.

The Emperor had received the education of a Byzantine prince; he was therefore a theologian. He had composed sermons which he ordered to be read in churches; an important theological work, which the Patriarch Nicephorus made it his business to refute, had been published under his name, and he had his own doctrine and his personal opinion on the grave problems which had been raised since 726. Not only was he, like Leo III, the enemy of images, but he condemned the *cultus* of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, he considered prayers addressed to them useless, and punished those who begged for their intercession. All the writers tell us of the want of respect which the Emperor shewed to the Theotokos; all the authorities represent him as charging the upholders of images with idolatry, and the Fathers of the Council of 753 congratulate him

¹ For details of the Arab and Bulgar wars, see *infra*, Chapters v (A), pp. 121-3, and viii, pp. 231-2.

on having saved the world by ridding it of idols. Further, he was deeply sensible of the perils of monasticism. He reproached the monks with inculcating a spirit of detachment and of contempt of the world, with encouraging men to forsake their families and withdraw from the court and from official life to fling themselves into the cloisters. Thus, as with Leo III, political considerations added weight to religious ones in Constantine V's mind. But, more passionate and fanatical than his father, he was to carry on the struggle by different methods, with greater eagerness in propaganda, and with a more unyielding and systematic bitterness in the work of repression.

Yet up to 753 the Emperor confined himself to enforcing Leo III's edicts in no very harsh spirit. At the most, it may be thought that he was preparing the ground for his future action when in 745 or 751 he removed to Thrace a number of Syrians and Armenians hostile to images, and when in 747, after the pestilence, he practically re-peopled Constantinople with men not less devoted to his opinions. But he waited until his power had been consolidated by eleven years of glory and prosperity before resolving on any decisive step. Towards the end of 752 Constantine had made sure of the devotion of the army, and of the sympathy, or at least the acquiescence, of a large proportion of the secular clergy. The people of the capital had become very hostile to the monks. Finally, the patriarchal chair was vacant since the death of Anastasius (752). The Emperor convoked a Council to decide the question of image-worship; on 10 February 753 three hundred and thirty-eight bishops met in the palace of Hieria on the Bosphorus.

The Council intended to deal seriously with the task entrusted to it. Its labours were long and onerous, lasting without interruption from 10 February to the end of August 753. It does not at all appear that the prelates in their deliberations were subjected to any pressure from the imperial authority. They in no wise accepted all the opinions professed by Constantine V; they resolutely maintained the orthodox doctrine concerning the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, and anathematised all who should deny to Mary the title of Theotokos. But they solemnly condemned the worship of images "as a thing hateful and abominable," and declared that whoever persisted in adoring them, whether layman or monk, "should be punished by the imperial laws as a rebel against the commandments of God, and an enemy of the dogma of the Fathers." And after having excommunicated the most illustrious champions of the icons, and acclaimed in the persons of the Emperors "the saviours of the world and the luminaries of orthodoxy," and hailed in Constantine V "a thirteenth apostle," they separated.

The decrees of the Council involved one serious consequence. Heretofore the iconodules had only been proceeded against as contravening the imperial ordinances. They were, for the future, to be treated as

heretics and rebels against the authority of the Church. By entrusting to the imperial power the task of carrying the canons into effect, the bishops were putting a terrible weapon into Constantine's hands, and one specially fitted to strike at the priests and monks. Any spiritual person refusing to support the dogma promulgated by the Council might, in fact, be condemned with pitiless rigour.

Yet the Emperor, it would seem, was in no haste to make use of the means put at his disposal. During the years that followed the Council, two executions at most are mentioned (in 761). The sovereign appears to have been bent rather on negotiating with his opponents in order to obtain their submission by gentle methods. Also, at this moment the Bulgarian war was absorbing his whole attention. It was not until peace had been signed in 765, and he realised the futility of his controversy with the most famous of the monks, that Constantine decided on crushing resistance by force. The era of martyrs then set in.

"In that year" (September 764—September 765), writes Theophanes, "the Emperor raged madly against all that feared God." The oath to renounce images was imposed upon all subjects, and at the altar of St Sophia the Patriarch Constantine was forced to be the first to swear to abandon the worship of the forbidden "idols." Thereupon persecution was let loose throughout the Empire. At Constantinople all the still numerous images left in the churches were destroyed; the frescoes were blotted out, the mosaics broken, and the panels, on which figures of the Saints were painted, scraped bare. "All beauty," says a contemporary, "disappeared from the churches." All writings in support of images were ordered to be destroyed. Certain sacred buildings, from which the relics were removed, were even secularised; the church of St Euphemia became an arsenal. And everywhere a scheme of decoration secular in spirit took the place of the banished pictures.

Measures no less harsh were taken against persons. The great officials, and even the bishops, eagerly hunted down everyone guilty of concealing an image or of preserving a relic or amulet. The monks especially were proceeded against with extreme violence. Constantine V seems to have had a peculiar hatred of them; "he called their habit," says one authority, "the raiment of darkness, and those who wore it he called ἀμνημόνευτοι (those who are no more to be spoken of)." "He set himself," says another witness, "to destroy the monastic order entirely." The Fathers of the later Council of 787 recall with indignation "the tortures inflicted on pious men," the arrests, imprisonments, blows, exile, tearing out of eyes, branding of faces with red-hot irons, cutting off of noses and tongues. The Emperor forbade his subjects to receive communion from a monk; he strove to compel the religious to lay aside their habit and go back to civil life. The property of convents was confiscated, the monasteries secularised and bestowed as fiefs on the prince's favourites; some of them were converted into barracks. The Emperor, to effect the suppres-

sion of the monastic orders, scrupled at no expedient. There were terror-striking executions, such as that of St Stephen the Younger, Abbot of Mount St Auxentius, whom Constantine, after vainly attempting to bring him over to his side, allowed to be done to death by the crowd in the streets of Constantinople (20 November 764). Scandalous and ridiculous exhibitions took place in the Hippodrome, where, amidst the hootings of the crowd, monks were forced to file past, each holding a woman by the hand. In the provinces the governors employed the same measures with equal zeal. Michael Lachanodraco, strategus of the Thracians, assembled all the monks and nuns of his province in a square at Ephesus, giving them the choice between marriage and death. And the Emperor, writing to congratulate him, says: "I have found a man after my own heart: you have carried out my wishes."

The monks stubbornly resisted the persecution. If, acting on the advice of their leaders, many left Constantinople to seek a refuge in the provinces, the leaders themselves, with courageous insolence, defied the Emperor to his face, and, in spite of the edicts, carried on their propaganda even among those nearest to his person. This was conduct which Constantine V would not tolerate. On 25 August 765, nineteen great dignitaries were paraded in the Circus as guilty of high treason, and in particular, says Theophanes, of having kept up intercourse with St Stephen and glorified his martyrdom. Several of them were executed, others were blinded and exiled. Some days later the Patriarch Constantine was, in his turn, arrested as having shared in the plot, exiled to the Princes Islands, and superseded in the patriarchal chair. In the following year he was brought back to Constantinople, and, after long and ignominious tortures, was finally beheaded (15 August 767). During the five or six years from 765 to 771 persecution raged furiously, so much so, that, as was said by a contemporary, no doubt with some exaggeration, "Byzantium seemed emptied of the monastic order" and "no trace of the accursed breed of monks was to be found there."

Without accepting literally all that chroniclers and hagiographers have related, it is certain that the struggle gave occasion for deeds of indescribable violence and nameless acts of harshness and cruelty; but it is certain also that several of the party of resistance, by the provocations they offered, drew down upon themselves the severity of those in power and let loose the brutal hostility of the populace. It must also be remarked that, if there were some sensational condemnations, the capital executions were, taken altogether, somewhat rare. The harsh treatment and the punishments usual under Byzantine justice undoubtedly struck down numerous victims. The government was even more bent on making the monks ridiculous than on punishing them, and frequently tried to rid itself of them by banishing them or allowing them to flee. Many of them crossed over to Italy, and the Emperor was well pleased to see them go to strengthen Byzantine influence in the West. Many

also gave way. "Won over by flattery or promises or dignities," writes the Patriarch Nicephorus, "they forswore their faith, adopted lay dress, allowed their hair to grow, and began to frequent the society of women." "Many," says another authority, "preferred the praise of men to the praise of God, or even allowed themselves to be entangled by the pleasures of the flesh." On the other hand, in the provinces many communities had resigned themselves to accept the decrees of the Council, and although in Constantinople itself many monks still lived in hiding, Constantine V might on the whole flatter himself that he had overcome the opponents upon whom he had declared war.

In Italy this victory had cost the Empire dear. We have seen that from the beginning of the eighth century the people of the peninsula were becoming more and more alienated from Constantinople. At Rome, and in the duchy of which it was the capital, the real sovereign was in fact the Pope rather than the Emperor¹. Yet since in 740 Gregory III had been succeeded by a Pope of Greek origin, Zacharias, relations between the Empire and its Western provinces had been less strained. Zacharias, at the time of the revolt of Artavasdus, had remained loyal to the cause of the legitimate sovereign, and during the subsequent years he had put his services at the disposal of the Empire, to be used, with some success, in checking the progress of the Lombards (743 and 749). But when in 751 Aistulf obtained possession of Ravenna and the Exarchate, Zacharias' successor, Stephen II, was soon induced to take up a different attitude. He saw the Lombards at the gates of Rome, and, confronted with this imminent danger, he found that the Emperor, to whom he made desperate appeals for help, only replied by charging him with a diplomatic mission to the Lombard king (who proved obdurate) and perhaps also to the King of the Franks, Pepin, whose military intervention in Italy, for the advantage of the Emperor, was hoped for at Constantinople. Did Stephen II, realising that no support was to be expected from the East, consider it wiser and more practical to recur to the policy of Gregory III, and did he take the initiative in petitioning for other help? Or else, though the Emperor's mandatory in France, did he forget the mission entrusted to him, and, perhaps influenced by accounts received from Constantinople (the Council of Hieria was at that very moment condemning images), allow himself to be tempted by Pepin's offers, and, treacherously abandoning the Byzantine cause, play for his own hand? The question is a delicate one, and not easy of solution. A first convention agreed to with Pepin at Ponthion (January 754) was, at the Assembly of Quierzy (Easter 754), followed up by more precise engagements. The Frankish king recognised the right of the Pope to govern in his own name the territories of Rome and Ravenna, whereas, up to then, he had administered Rome in the name of the Emperor,

¹ See Vol. II, pp. 231-232 and 576-580.

and when Pepin had reconquered them from the Lombards, he did in fact solemnly hand them over to Stephen II (754)¹.

It was not till 756 that the real meaning of the Frankish king's intervention was understood at Constantinople, when, on the occasion of his second expedition to Italy, Pepin declared to the ambassadors of Constantine V that he had undertaken the campaign in no wise to serve the imperial interest, but on the invitation of the Pope. The Frankish king's language swept away the last illusions of the Greeks. They understood that Italy was lost to them, and that the breach between Rome and Constantinople was final.

The Emperor had no other thought henceforth than to punish one in whom he could only see a disloyal and treacherous subject, unlawfully usurping dominion over lands which belonged to his master. On the one hand, from 756 to 774 he did his utmost to break off the alliance between Pepin and the Papacy, and to induce the Frankish king to forsake his protégé; but in this he met with no success. On the other hand, he sought by every means to create difficulties for the Roman Pontiffs in the peninsula. His emissaries set themselves to rouse resistance to the Pope, at Ravenna and elsewhere, among all who were still loyal to the imperial authority. In 759 Constantine V joined forces with Desiderius, King of the Lombards, for the re-conquest of Italy and a joint attempt to recover Otranto. And, in fact, in 760 a fleet of three hundred sail left Constantinople to reinforce the Greek squadron from Sicily, and to make preparations for a landing. All these attempts were to prove useless. When in 774 Charlemagne, making a fresh intervention in Italy, annexed the Lombard kingdom, he solemnly at St Peter's confirmed, perhaps even increased, the donation of Pepin². The Byzantines had lost Italy, retaining nothing but Venice and a few places in the south of the peninsula. Again, too, the Synod of the Lateran (769), by anathematizing the opponents of images, had completed the religious separation between Rome and the East. When in 781 Pope Hadrian ceased to date his official acts by the regnal year of the Emperor, the last link disappeared which, on the political side, still seemed to bind Italy to the Empire.

The Greeks of the eighth century appear to have been little concerned, and the Emperor himself seems to have regarded with some indifference, the loss of a province which had been gradually becoming more detached from the Empire. His attention was now bestowed rather on the Eastern regions of the Empire which constituted its strength, and whose safety, unity, and prosperity he made every effort to secure. Perhaps also the intrinsic importance which he had come to attach to his religious policy made him too forgetful of perils coming

¹ See, for details of these events, Vol. II, pp. 582-589.

² See Vol. II, pp. 590-592 and 597-600.

from without. When on 14 September 775 the old Emperor died, he left the Empire profoundly disturbed by internal disputes; under Constantine V's successors the disadvantages of this state of discontent and agitation, and of his over-concentration on religious questions, were soon to become evident.

III.

Constantine V before his death had drawn from his son and successor a promise to carry on his policy. Leo IV, surnamed the Chazar, during his short reign (775-780) exerted himself to this end. Abroad he resumed, not ingloriously, the struggle with the Arabs; in 778 an army of 100,000 men invaded Northern Syria, besieged Germanicea, and won a brilliant victory over the Musulmans. The Emperor gave no less attention to the affairs of Italy; he welcomed to Constantinople Adelchis, son of Desiderius, the Lombard king dethroned by Charlemagne, and in concert with him and with the Duke of Benevento, Arichis, he meditated an intervention in the peninsula. At home, however, in spite of his attachment to the iconoclast doctrines, he judged it prudent at first to shew himself less hostile to images and to the monks. He dreaded, not without reason, the intrigues of the Caesars, his brothers, one of whom he was in the end forced to banish to Cherson; he was anxious, feeling himself in bad health, to give stability to the throne of his young son Constantine, whom at the Easter festival of 776 he had solemnly admitted to a share in the imperial dignity; and, finally, he was much under the influence of his wife Irene, an Athenian by origin, who was secretly devoted to the party of the monks. Leo IV, however, ended by becoming tired of his policy of tolerance. Towards the end of his reign (April 780) persecution set in afresh: executions took place even in the circle round the Emperor; certain churches, besides, were despoiled of their treasures, and this relapse of the sovereign into "his hidden malignity," as Theophanes expresses it, might have led to consequences of some gravity, but for the death of the Emperor on 8 September 780, leaving the throne to a child of ten, his son Constantine, and the regency to his widow the Empress Irene.

Irene was born in a province zealously attached to the worship of images, and she was devout. There was thus no question where her sympathies lay. She had indeed towards the end of the preceding reign somewhat compromised herself by her iconodule opinions; once at the head of affairs her first thought would be to put an end to a struggle which had lasted for more than half a century and of which many within the Empire were weary. But Irene was ambitious also, and keenly desirous of ruling; her whole life long she was led by one dominating idea, a lust for power amounting to an obsession. In pursuit of this end she allowed no obstacle to stay her and no scruple to turn her aside. Proud and passionate, she easily persuaded herself that she was the instrument to

work out the Divine purposes, and, consequently, from the day that she assumed the regency in her son's name, she worked with skill and with tenacious resolution at the great task whence she expected the realisation of her vision.

In carrying out the projects suggested by her devotion and in fulfilling the dreams of her ambition, Irene, however, found herself faced by many difficulties. The Arabs renewed their incursions in 781; next year Michael Lachanodraco was defeated at Dazimon, and the Musulmans pushed on to Chrysopolis, opposite the capital. An insurrection broke out in Sicily (781), and in Macedonia and Greece the Slavs rose. But above all, many rival ambitions were growing round the young Empress, and much opposition was shewing itself. The Caesars, her brothers-in-law, were secretly hostile to her, and the memory of their father Constantine V drew many partisans to their side. The great offices of the government were all held by zealous iconoclasts. The army was still devoted to the policy of the late reign. Finally the Church, which was controlled by the Patriarch Paul, was full of the opponents of images, and the canons of the Council of Hieria formed part of the law of the land.

Irene contrived very skilfully to prepare her way. Some of her adversaries she overthrew, and others she thrust on one side. A plot formed to raise her brothers-in-law to the throne was used by her to compel them to enter the priesthood (Christmas 780). She dismissed the old servants of Constantine V from favour, and entrusted the government to men at her devotion, especially to eunuchs of her household. One of them even became her chief minister: Stauracius, raised by Irene's good graces to the dignity of Patrician and the functions of Logothete of the Dromos, became the undisputed master of the Palace; for twenty years he was to follow the fortunes of his benefactress with unshaken loyalty.

Meanwhile, in order to have her hands free, Irene made peace with the Arabs (783); in the West she was drawing nearer to the Papacy, and made request to Charlemagne for the hand of his daughter Rotrude for the young Constantine VI. Sicily was pacified. Stauracius subdued the Slav revolt. The Empress could give herself up completely to her religious policy.

From the very outset of her regency she had introduced a system of toleration such as had been long unknown. Monks re-appeared in the capital, resuming their preaching and their religious propaganda; amends were made for the sacrilegious acts of the preceding years; and the devout party, filled with hope, thanked God for the unlooked-for miracle, and hailed the approaching day when "by the hand of a widowed woman and an orphan child, impiety should be overthrown, and the Church set free from her long enslavement."

A subtle intrigue before long placed the Patriarchate itself at the Empress' disposal. In 784 the Patriarch Paul abruptly resigned his

office. In his place Irene procured the appointment of a man of her own, a layman, the imperial secretary Tarasius. The latter, on accepting, declared that it was time to put an end to the strife which disturbed the Church, and to the schism which separated her from Rome; and while repudiating the decisions of the synod of 753 as tainted with illegality, he skilfully put forward the project of an Ecumenical Council which should restore peace and unity to the Christian world. The Empress wrote to this effect to Pope Hadrian, who entered into her views, and with the support of these two valuable allies she summoned the prelates of Christendom to Constantinople for the spring of 786.

But Irene had been too precipitate. She had not reckoned with the hostility of the army and even of some of the Eastern bishops. On the opening of the Council (17 August 786) in the church of the Holy Apostles, the soldiers of the guard disturbed the gathering by a noisy demonstration and dispersed the orthodox. Irene herself, who was present at the ceremony, escaped with some difficulty from the infuriated zealots. The whole of her work had to be begun over again. Some of the provincial troops were dexterously won over; then a pretext was found for removing from the capital and disbanding such regiments of the guard as were ill-disposed. Finally, the Council was convoked at Nicaea in Bithynia; it was opened in the presence of the papal legates on 24 September 787. This was the seventh Ecumenical Council.

Three hundred and fifty bishops were present, surrounded by a fervent crowd of monks and igumens. The assembly found a month sufficient for the decision of all the questions before it. The worship of images was restored, with the single restriction that adoration (*λατρεία*) should not be claimed for them, but only veneration (*προσκύνησις*); the doctrine concerning images was established on dogmatic foundations; finally, under the influence of Plato, Abbot of Sakkudion, ecclesiastical discipline and Christian ethics were restored in all their strictness, and a strong breeze of asceticism pervaded the whole Byzantine world. The victorious monks had even higher aims in view; from this time Plato and his nephew, the famous Theodore of Studion, dreamed of claiming for the Church absolute independence of the State, and denied to the Emperor the right to intermeddle with anything involving dogma or religion. This was before long to produce fresh conflicts graver and of higher importance than that which had arisen out of the question of images.

In November 787 the Fathers of the Church betook themselves to Constantinople, and in a solemn sitting held in the Magnaura palace the Empress signed with her own hand the canons restoring the beliefs which she loved. And the devout party, proud of such a sovereign, hailed her magniloquently as the "Christ-supporting Empress whose government, like her name, is a symbol of peace" (*χριστοφόρος Ειρήνη, ἡ φερωνύμως βασιλεύουσα*).

Irene's ambition was very soon to disturb the peace which was still insecure. Constantine VI was growing up; he was in his eighteenth year. Between a son who wished to govern and a mother with a passion for supreme power a struggle was inevitable. To safeguard her work, not less than to retain her authority, Irene was to shrink from nothing, not even from crime.

Formerly, at the outset of the reign, she had, as a matter of policy, negotiated a marriage for her son with Charlemagne's daughter. She now from policy broke it off, no doubt considering the Frankish alliance less necessary to her after the Council of Nicaea, but, above all, dreading lest the mighty King Charles should prove a support to his son-in-law against her. She forced another marriage upon Constantine (788) with a young Paphlagonian, named Maria, from whom she knew she had nothing to fear. Besides this, acting in concert with her minister Stauracius, the Empress kept her son altogether in the background. But Constantine VI in the end grew tired of this state of pupilage and conspired against the all-powerful eunuch (January 790). Things fell out ill with him. The conspirators were arrested, tortured, and banished; the young Emperor himself was flogged like an unruly boy and put under arrest in his apartments. And Irene, counting herself sure of victory, and intoxicated, besides, with the flatteries of her dependents, required of the army an oath that, so long as she lived, her son should never be recognised as Emperor, while in official proclamations she caused her name to be placed before that of Constantine.

She was running great risks. The army, still devoted to the memory of Constantine V, was further in very ill humour at the checks which it had met with through Irene's foreign policy. The Arab war, renewed by the Caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd (September 786), had been disastrous both by land and sea. In Europe the imperial troops had been beaten by the Bulgars (788). In Italy the breach with the Franks had led to a disaster. A strong force, sent to the peninsula to restore the Lombard prince, Adelehis, had been completely defeated, and its commander slain (788). The troops attributed these failures to the weakness of a woman's government. The regiments in Asia, therefore, mutinied (790), demanding the recognition of Constantine VI, and from the troops in Armenia the insurrection spread to the other themes. Irene took the alarm and abdicated (December 790). Stauracius and her other favourites fell with her, and Constantine VI, summoning round him the faithful counsellors of his grandfather and his father, took power into his own hands.

The young Emperor seems to have had some really valuable qualities. He was of an energetic temper and martial instincts; he boldly resumed the offensive against the Arabs (791-795) and against the Bulgars (791). Though the latter in 792 inflicted a serious defeat on him, he succeeded in 796 during a fresh campaign in restoring the reputation of his troops. All this recommended him to the soldiers and the people. Unfortunately

his character was unstable: he was devoid of lasting suspicion or resentment. Barely a year after the fall of Irene, yielding to her pressing requests, he restored to her the title of Empress and associated her in the supreme power. At the same time he took back Stauraeus as his chief minister. Irene came back thirsting for vengeance and more eager than ever in pursuit of her ambitious designs. She spent five patient years working up her triumph, and with diabolical art bred successive quarrels between her son and all who were attached to him, lowering him in the eyes of the army, undermining him in the favour of the people, and finally ruining him with the Church.

At the very beginning she used her newly regained influence to rouse Constantine's suspicions against Alexius Musel , the general who had engineered the *pronunciamento* of 790, succeeding so well that the Emperor disgraced him and had him blinded. On learning this usage of their leader the legions in Armenia mutinied, and the Emperor was obliged to go in person to crush the revolt (793). This he did with great harshness, thus alienating the hearts of the soldiers who were his best support. At the same time, just as on the morrow of the Bulgar defeat (792), the Caesars, his uncles, again bestirred themselves. Irene persuaded her son to put out the eyes of the eldest and to cut out the tongues of the four others, an act of cruelty which availed little, and made the prince extremely unpopular with the iconoclasts. Then, to excite public opinion against him, she devised a last expedient.

Constantine VI had become enamoured of one of the Empress-mother's maids of honour, named Theodote, and Irene had lent herself complaisantly to this passion. She even counselled her son to put away his wife in order to marry the girl—as she was well aware of the scandal which would follow. The Emperor lent a ready ear to this advice. In spite of the opposition of the Patriarch Tarasius, who courageously refused a demand to facilitate the divorce, he dismissed Maria to a convent and married Theodote (September 795). There was a general outburst of indignation throughout the religious party at this adulterous connexion. The monks, especially those of the Sakkudion with Plato and Theodore at their head, abounded in invective against the bigamous Emperor, the “new Herod,” and condemned the weakness of the Patriarch in tolerating this abomination. Irene surreptitiously encouraged their resistance. In vain did Constantine VI flatter himself that, by courtesy and calmness, he could allay the excitement of his opponents, even going so far as to pay a visit in person to the monks of the Sakkudion (796) and coolly replying to their insults “that he did not intend to make martyrs.” At last, however, in the face of their uncompromising mood, he lost patience. He caused the monks of the Sakkudion to be arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and exiled. These severities only exasperated public opinion, which Irene turned to her own advantage. While the court was at the baths of Prusa, she worked up the plot which was to restore her to power. It burst forth

17 July 797. The Emperor was arrested and imprisoned at the Palace, in the Porphyry Chamber where he had been born, and by his mother's orders his eyes were put out. He was allowed, with his wife Theodote, to end his days in peaceful obscurity. Irene was Empress.

The devout party were determined to see in this odious crime of a mother against her son nothing but the just punishment of an adulterous and persecuting Emperor, and traced the hand of Providence in an event which brought back to power the most pious Irene, the restorer of orthodoxy. She, quite unmoved, boldly seized upon the government, and, as though intoxicated with her omnipotence and with the delight of having realised her dreams, did not hesitate—such a thing had never been seen and never was to be seen again in Constantinople—to assume, woman as she was, the title of Emperor. Skilfully, too, she secured her authority and maintained her popularity. She banished to Athens the Caesars, her brothers-in-law, who were again conspiring (797), and a little later she had the four younger blinded (799). To her friends the monks she gave tokens of favour, building new monasteries and richly endowing the famous convents of the Sakkudion in Bithynia and the Studion in Constantinople. In order to win over the people, she granted large remissions of taxation, lowering the customs duties and the taxes on provisions. The delighted capital greeted its benefactress with acclamations.

Meanwhile, secret intrigues were being woven around the Empress, now aged and in bad health. Irene's favourites, Stauracius and Aëtius, had dreams of securing the throne for one of their relatives, there being now no legitimate heir. And for more than a year there raged round the irritated and suspicious Irene a heated and merciless struggle. Stauracius was the first to die, in the middle of 800. While the Byzantine court wore itself out in these barren disputes, the Arabs, under the rule of Hārūn ar-Rashīd, again took the offensive and forced the Empire to pay them tribute (798). In the West, peace was signed with the Franks, Benevento and Istria being ceded to them (798). Soon an event of graver importance took place. On 25 December 800, in St Peter's at Rome, Charlemagne restored the Empire of the West, a deep humiliation for the Byzantine monarchy which claimed to be the legitimate heir of the Roman Caesars.

It is said that a sensational project was conceived in the brains both of Charlemagne and Irene—that of a marriage which should join their two monarchies under one sceptre, and restore, more fully than in the time of Augustus, Constantine, or Justinian, the ancient unity of the *orbis Romanus*. In spite of the distinct testimony of Theophanes, the story lacks verisimilitude. Intrigues were, indeed, going on round the old Empress more eagerly than ever. Delivered from his rival Stauracius, Aëtius was pushing his advantage hotly. Other great lords were opposing him, and the Logothete-General, Nicephorus, was utilising the common dissatisfaction for his own ends. The iconoclasts also were secretly planning their revenge. On 31 October 802 the revolution broke

out. The palace was carried without difficulty, and Nicephorus proclaimed Emperor. Irene, who was absent at the Eleutherian Palace, was arrested there and brought back to the capital; she did nothing in her own defence. The people, who were attached to her, openly shewed themselves hostile to the conspirators, and the coronation, at which the Patriarch Tarasius had no scruple in officiating, was somewhat stormy. Irene, "like a wise woman, beloved of God," as a contemporary says, submitted to accomplished facts. She was exiled, first to the Princes Islands, and then, as she still seemed too near, to Lesbos. She died there soon afterwards (August 803).

Her contemporaries forgave everything, even her crimes, to the pious and orthodox sovereign, the restorer of image-worship. Theophanes, as well as Theodore of Studion, overwhelm with praise and flattery the blessed Irene, the new Helena, whose actions "shine like the stars." In truth, this famous sovereign was essentially a woman-politician, ambitious and devout, carried away by her passion for empire even into crime, one who did more injury than service to the interests of the monarchy. By her too exclusive absorption in the work of restoring images, she weakened the Empire without and left it shrunken territorially and shaken morally. By the exaggerated deference which she shewed to the Church, by the position which, thanks to her, that Church, with strength renewed by the struggle, assumed in the Byzantine community, by the power which the devout and monastic party under such leaders as Theodore of Studion acquired as against the State, the imperial authority found itself seriously prejudiced. The deep divisions left by the controversy over images produced a dangerous state of discontent and unrest; the defeated iconoclasts waited impatiently, looking for their revenge. Finally, by her intrigues and her crime, Irene had made a perilous return to the period of palace revolutions, which her glorious predecessors, the Isaurian Emperors, had brought to a close for nearly a century.

And yet at the dawn of the ninth century the Byzantine Empire still held a great place in the world. In the course of the eighth century, through the loss of Italy and the restoration of the Empire of the West, and also through the preponderance in the Byzantine Empire of its Asiatic provinces, that Empire became an essentially Oriental monarchy. And this development in a direction in which it had for a long time been tending, finally determined its destiny and the part it was to play. One of the greatest services rendered by the Isaurian Emperors had been to put a period to the advance of Islām; the Empire was to be thenceforward the champion of Europe against the infidel. In the same way, as against barbarism, it was to remain throughout the East of Europe the disseminator of the Christian Faith and the guardian of civilisation.

Despite the bitterness of the quarrel over images, the Byzantine State

came forth from the ordeal with youth renewed, full of fervour and vigour. The Church, not only stronger but also purer for the conflict, had felt the need of a moral reformation which should give her fresh life. Between 797 and 806, in the Studion monastery, the Abbot Theodore had drawn up for his monks that famous rule which, with admirable feeling for practical administration, combines manual work, prayer, and regard for intellectual development. In lay society, taught and led by the preaching of the monks, we find a like stress laid on piety, chastity, and renunciation. No doubt among these devoted and enthusiastic spirits a strange hardness may sometimes be noticed, and the heat of the struggle occasionally generated in them a singular perversion of the moral sense and a forgetfulness of the most elementary ideas of justice, to say nothing of a tendency to superstition. But these pious souls and these holy women, of whom the eighth century offers so many examples, lent an unparalleled lustre to the Byzantine Church; and since for some years it was they who were the leaders of opinion, that Church drew from them and kept throughout the following century a force and a greatness never equalled.

The opponents of images, on their side, have contributed no less to this splendour of Byzantine civilisation. Though making war upon icons, the Isaurian Emperors were anything but Puritans. In place of the religious pictures which they destroyed they caused secular and even still-life subjects to be portrayed in churches and palaces alike—scenes of the kind formerly affected by Alexandrine art, horse-races, hippodrome games, landscapes with trees and birds, and also historical scenes depicting the great military events of the time. In the style of this Iconoclastic art, especially in its taste for the decorative, there is a genuine return to antique traditions of the picturesque, mingled with influences derived from the Arab East. This was by no means all to be lost. The renaissance of the tenth century owed more than is generally thought to these new tendencies of the Iconoclastic period.

The same character is traceable in the thoroughly secular and oriental splendour with which the Byzantine court surrounded itself, in the lustre of its fêtes, which were still almost pagan, such as the Brumalia, in which traditions of antiquity were revived, in the taste for luxury shewn by private individuals and even by churchmen. With this taste for elegance and art there was a corresponding and very powerful intellectual advance. It will suffice to recall the names of George Syncellus and Theophanes, of John Damascene and Theodore of Studion, of the Patriarchs Tarasius and Nicephorus, to notice the wide development given to education, and the breadth of mind and tolerance to be met with among certain men of the day, in order to realise that here also the Iconoclastic period had been far from barren. Certainly the Empire in the ninth century had still many years to go through of disaster and anarchy. Yet from the government of the Isaurian Emperors a new principle of life had sprung, which was to enrich the world for ever.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES OF PERIODICALS, SOCIETIES, ETC.

(1) The following abbreviations are used for titles of periodicals :

- AB. Analecta Bollandiana. Brussels.
 AHR. American Historical Review. New York and London.
 AKKR. Archiv für katholisches Kirchenrecht. Mayence.
 AMur. Archivio Muratoriano. Rome.
 Arch. Ven. (and N. Arch. Ven.; Arch. Ven.-Tri.). Archivio veneto. Venice. 40 vols. 1871-90. Continued as Nuovo archivio veneto. 1st series. 20 vols. 1891-1900. New series. 42 vols. 1901-1921. And Archivio veneto-tridentino. 1922 ff., in progress.
 ASAK. Anzeiger für schweizerische Alterthumskunde. Zurich.
 ASHF. Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France. Paris.
 ASI. Archivio storico italiano. Florence. Ser. i. 20 v. and App. 9 v. 1842-53. Index. 1857. Ser. nuova. 18 v. 1855-63. Ser. iii. 26 v. 1865-77. Indexes to ii and iii. 1874. Suppl. 1877. Ser. iv. 20 v. 1878-87. Index. 1891. Ser. v. 49 v. 1888-1912. Index. 1900. Anni 71 etc. 1913 ff., in progress. (Index in Catalogue of The London Library vol. i. 1913.)
 ASL. Archivio storico lombardo. Milan.
 ASPN. Archivio storico per le province napoletane. Naples. 1876 ff.
 ASRSP. Archivio della Società romana di storia patria. Rome.
 BISI. Bollettino dell' Istituto storico italiano. Rome. 1886 ff.
 BRAH. Boletín de la R. Academia de la historia. Madrid.
 BZ. Byzantinische Zeitschrift. Leipsic. 1892 ff.
 CQR. Church Quarterly Review. London.
 CR. Classical Review. London.
 DZG. Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft. Freiburg-im-Breisgau.
 DZKR. Deutsche Zeitschrift für Kirchenrecht. Leipsic.
 EHR. English Historical Review. London.
 FDG. Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte. Göttingen.
 HJ. Historisches Jahrbuch. Munich.
 HVJS. Historische Vierteljahrsschrift. Leipsic.
 HZ. Historische Zeitschrift (von Sybel). Munich and Berlin.
 JA. Journal Asiatique. Paris.
 JB. Jahresberichte der Geschichtswissenschaft im Auftrage der historischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin. Berlin. 1878 ff.
 JHS. Journal of Hellenic Studies. London.
 JRAS. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain. London.
 JSG. Jahrbuch für schweizerische Geschichte. Zurich.
 JTS. Journal of Theological Studies. London.
 MA. Le moyen âge. Paris.
 MIOGF. Mittheilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung. Innsbruck.
 Neu. Arch. Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde Hanover and Leipsic.
 NRDF. Nouvelle Revue historique du droit français. Paris.
 QFIA. Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken. Rome.
 RA. Revue archéologique. Paris.

RBén.	Revue bénédictine. Maredsous.
RCHL.	Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature. Paris.
RH.	Revue historique. Paris.
RHD.	Revue d'histoire diplomatique. Paris.
RIIE.	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique. Louvain.
Rhein. Mus.	Rheinisches Museum für Philologie. Frankfurt-on-Main.
RN.	Revue de numismatique. Paris.
RQCA.	Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte. Rome.
RQH.	Revue des questions historiques. Paris.
RSIL.	Revue de synthèse historique. Paris.
RSI.	Rivista storica italiana. Turin. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
SKAW.	Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Vienna. [Philos.-hist. Classe.]
SPAW.	Sitzungsberichte der kön. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin.
TRHS.	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society. London.
VV.	Vizantiyski Vremennik (Византийское время). St Petersburg (Petrograd). 1894 ff.
ZCK.	Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst. Düsseldorf.
ZDMG.	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Leipsic.
ZKG.	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte. Gotha.
ZKT.	Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie. Gotha.
ZMNP.	Zhurnal ministerstva narodnago prosvêsheniya (Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction). St Petersburg.
ZR.	Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte. Weimar. 1861-78. Continued as
ZSR.	Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtswissenschaft. Weimar. 1880 ff.
ZWT.	Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie. Frankfurt-on-Main.

(2) Other abbreviations used are :

AcadIBL.	Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.
AcadIP.	Académie Impériale de Pétersbourg.
AllgDB.	Allgemeine deutsche Biographie. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
ASBen.	<i>See</i> Mabillon and Achery in <i>Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
ASBoll.	Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
BEC.	Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
BGén.	Nouvelle Biographie générale. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
BHE.	Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
Bouquet.	<i>See</i> Rerum Gallicarum...scriptores in <i>Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
BUniv.	Biographie universelle. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
Coll. textes.	Collection des textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
CSCO.	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
CSEL.	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
CSHB.	Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
DNB.	Dictionary of National Biography. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
EcfAR.	Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome. Paris.
EncBr.	Encyclopaedia Britannica. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
Ersch-Gruber.	Ersch and Gruber's Allgemeine Encyclopädie. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> 1.
Fonti.	Fonti per la storia d'Italia. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
Jaffé.	<i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
KAW.	Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften. Vienna.
Mansi.	<i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
MEC.	Mémoires et documents publ. par l'École des Chartes. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
MGH.	Monumenta Germaniae Historica. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
MIIP.	Monumenta historiae patriae. Turin. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
MIISM.	Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium. <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.
MPG.	Migne's Patrologiae cursus completus. Ser. graeco-latina. [Greek texts with Latin translations in parallel columns.] <i>See Gen. Bibl.</i> iv.

MPL.	Migne's Patrologiae cursus completus. Ser. latina. <i>See Gen. Bibl. iv.</i>
PAW.	Königliche preussische Akademie d. Wissenschaften. Berlin.
RAH.	Real Academia de la Historia. Madrid.
RC.	Record Commissioners.
RE ³ .	Real-Encyclopädie für protestantische Theologie, etc. <i>See Herzog and Hauck in Gen. Bibl. i.</i>
Rec. hist. Cr.	Recueil des historiens des Croisades. <i>See Gen. Bibl. iv.</i>
RGS.	Royal Geographical Society.
RHS.	Royal Historical Society.
Rolls.	Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi scriptores. <i>See Gen. Bibl. iv.</i>
RR.H.SS.	<i>See Muratori in Gen. Bibl. iv.</i>
SGUS.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum. <i>See Monumenta Germaniae Historica in Gen. Bibl. iv.</i>
SHF.	Société d'histoire française.
SRD.	Scriptores rerum Danicarum medii aevi. <i>See Gen. Bibl. iv.</i>

Abh.	Abhandlungen.	mem.	memoir.
antiq.	antiquarian, antiquaire.	mém.	mémoire.
app.	appendix.	n.s.	new series.
coll.	collection.	publ.	published, publié.
diss.	dissertation.	R. }	
hist.	history, historical, historique, historisch.	r. }	reale.
Jahrb.	Jahrbuch.	roy.	royal, royale.
k.	{kaiserlich. königlich.	ser.	series.
		soc.	society, société, società.
		Viert.	Vierteljahrschrift.

CHAPTER I.

LEO III AND THE ISAURIAN DYNASTY.

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

OF

LEADING EVENTS MENTIONED IN THIS VOLUME

- 330 (11 May) Inauguration of Constantinople, 'New Rome,' by Constantine the Great.
- 428-633 Persian rule in Armenia.
- 476 Deposition of Romulus Augustus.
- 529 Justinian's Code.
- 533 Justinian's *Digest* and *Institutes*.
- 535 Justinian's *Novels*.
- 537 Inauguration of St Sophia.
- 558 The Avars appear in Europe.
- 565 Death of Justinian.
- 568 The Lombards invade Italy.
- The Avars enter Pannonia.
- c. 582 Creation of the exarchates of Africa and Ravenna.
- 626 The Avars besiege Constantinople.
- 627 Defeat of the Persians by Heraclius at Nineveh.
- 631 The Avars defeat the Bulgarians.
- 633-693 Byzantine rule in Armenia.
- 635 The Bulgarians free themselves from the power of the Chazars.
- c. 650 Creation of the Asiatic themes.
- 679 Establishment of the Bulgarians south of the Danube.
- 693-862 Arab rule in Armenia.
- 713 First Venetian Doge elected.
- 717 (25 March) Accession of Leo III the Isaurian.
- 717-718 The Arabs besiege Constantinople.
- 726 Edict against images.
- 727 Insurrections in Greece and Italy.
- 732 Victory of Charles Martel at Poitiers (Tours).
- 739 Battle of Acroinon.
- 740 Publication of the *Ecloga*.
- Death of Leo III the Isaurian, and accession of Constantine V Copronymus.
- 741 Insurrection of Artavasdus.
- 742 (2 Nov.) Recovery of Constantinople by Constantine V.
- 744 Murder of Walid II. The Caliphate falls into anarchy.
- 747 Annihilation of the Egyptian fleet.
- 750 Foundation of the Abbasid Caliphate.
- 751 Taking of Ravenna by the Lombards.
- 753 Iconoclastic Council of Hieria.
- 754 Donation of Pepin to the Papacy.
- 755 The war with the Bulgarians begins.
- 756 'Abd-ar-Rahmān establishes an independent dynasty in Spain.
- 757 Election of Pope Paul IV. Ratification of Papal elections ceases to be asked of the Emperor of the East.
- 758 Risings of the Slavs of Thrace and Macedonia.
- 759 Defeat of the Bulgarians at Marcellae.
- 762 Baghdad founded by the Caliph Maṣṣūr.
- Defeat of the Bulgarians at Anchialus.
- 764-771 Persecution of the image-worshippers.
- 772 Defeat of the Bulgarians at Lithosoria.

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- 774 Annexion of the Lombard kingdom by Charlemagne.
 775 (14 Sept.) Death of the Emperor Constantine V and accession of Leo IV the Chazar.
 780 (8 Sept.) Death of Leo IV and Regency of Irene.
 781 Pope Hadrian I ceases to date official acts by the regnal years of the Emperor.
 787 Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. Condemnation of Iconoclasm.
 788 Establishment of the Idrisid dynasty in Morocco.
 790 (Dec.) Abdication of Irene. Constantine VI assumes power.
 797 (17 July) Deposition of Constantine VI. Irene becomes Emperor.
 800 Establishment of the Aghlabid dynasty in Tunis.
 (25 Dec.) Charlemagne crowned Emperor of the West.
 802 (31 Oct.) Deposition of Irene and accession of Nicephorus I.
 803 Destruction of the Barmecides.
 809 Death of Harūn ar-Rashid and civil war in the Caliphate.
 The Bulgarian Khan Krum invades the Empire.
 Pepin of Italy's attack upon Venice.
 810 Nicephorus I's scheme of financial reorganisation.
 Concentration of the lagoon-townships at Rialto.
 811 The Emperor Nicephorus I is defeated and slain by the Bulgarians: accession of Michael I Rangabé.
 812 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle recognises Charlemagne's imperial title.
 813 Michael I defeated at Versinicia: Krum appears before Constantinople.
 Deposition of Michael I and accession of Leo V the Armenian.
 Battle of Mesembria.
 Ma'mūn becomes sole Caliph.
 814 (14 April) Death of Krum: peace between the Empire and the Bulgarians.
 815 Iconoclastic synod of Constantinople.
 Banishment of Theodore of Studion.
 820 (25 Dec.) Murder of Leo V, and accession of Michael II the Amorian.
 822 Insurrection of Thomas the Slavonian.
 826 Death of Theodore of Studion.
 Conquest of Crete by the Arabs.
 827 Arab invasion of Sicily.
 829-842 Reign of Theophilus.
 832 Edict of Theophilus against images.
 833 Death of the Caliph Ma'mūn.
 836 The Abbasid capital removed from Baghdad to Sāmarrā.
 839 Treaty between the Russians and the Greeks.
 840 Treaty of Pavia between the Emperor Lothar I and Venice.
 842 The Arabs take Messina.
 Disintegration of the Caliphate begins.
 842-867 Reign of Michael III.
 843 Council of Constantinople, and final restoration of image-worship by the Empress Theodora.
 846 Ignatius becomes Patriarch.
 852-893 Reign of Boris in Bulgaria.
 856-866 Rule of Bardas.
 858 Deposition of Ignatius and election of Photius as Patriarch.
 860 The Russians appear before Constantinople.
 860-861(?) Cyril's mission to the Chazars.
 863(?) Mission of Cyril and Methodius to the Moravians.
 864 Conversion of Bulgaria to orthodoxy.
 867 The Schism of Photius.
 The Synod of Constantinople completes the rupture with Rome.
 (23 Sept.) Murder of Michael III and accession of Basil I the Macedonian.
 Deposition of Photius. Restoration of Ignatius.
 867 (13 Nov.) Death of Pope Nicholas I.
 (14 Dec.) Election of Pope Hadrian II.
 868 Independence of Egypt under the Tūlūnid dynasty.

- 869 (14 Feb.) Death of Cyril.
 Ecumenical Council of Constantinople. End of the Schism.
 870 Methodius becomes the first Moravo-Pannonian archbishop.
 871 War with the Paulicians.
 876 Capture of Bari from the Saracens by the Greeks.
 877 Death of Ignatius and reinstatement of Photius as Patriarch.
 (22 July) Council of Ravenna.
 878 (21 May) Capture of Syracuse by the Arabs.
 878 (?) Promulgation of the *Prochiron*.
 882 Fresh rupture between the Eastern and Western Churches; excommunication of Photius.
 885 (6 April) Death of Methodius.
 886-912 Reign of Leo VI the Wise.
 886 Deposition and exile of Photius.
 887-892 Reign of Ashot I in Armenia.
 c. 888 Publication of the *Basilics*.
 891 Death of Photius.
 892 The Abbasid capital restored to Baghdad.
 892-914 Reign of Smbat I in Armenia.
 893-927 Reign of Simeon in Bulgaria.
 895-896 The Magyars migrate into Hungary.
 898 Reconciliation between the Eastern and Western Churches.
 899 The Magyars invade Lombardy.
 900 Victory of Nicephorus Phocas at Adana.
 The Magyars occupy Pannonia.
 902 (1 Aug.) Fall of Taormina, the last Greek stronghold in Sicily.
 904 Thessalonica sacked by the Saracens.
 906 Leo VI's fourth marriage: contest with the Patriarch.
 The Magyars overthrow the Great Moravian State.
 907 Russian expedition against Constantinople.
 909-1171 The Fatimid Caliphate in Africa.
 912 (11 May) Death of Leo VI and accession of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus under the regency of Alexander.
 913 Simeon of Bulgaria appears before Constantinople.
 915-928 Reign of Ashot II in Armenia.
 917 (20 Aug.) Bulgarian victory at Anchialus.
 919 (25 Mar.) Usurpation of Romanus Lecapenus.
 920 (June) A Council at Constantinople pronounces upon fourth marriages.
 923 Simeon besieges Constantinople.
 927 (8 Sept.) Peace with Bulgaria.
 932 Foundation of the Buwaihid dynasty.
 933 Venice establishes her supremacy in Istria.
 941 Russian expedition against Constantinople.
 944 (16 Dec.) Deposition of Romanus Lecapenus. Personal rule of Constantine VII begins.
 945 The Buwaihids enter Baghdad and control the Caliphate.
 954 Princess Olga of Russia embraces Christianity.
 955 Battle of the Lechfeld.
 959 (9 Nov.) Death of Constantine VII and accession of Romanus II.
 959-976 Reign of the Doge Peter IV Candianus.
 961 Recovery of Crete by Nicephorus Phocas.
 (Mar.) Advance in Asia by the Greeks.
 Athanasius founds the convent of St Laura on Mt Athos.
 963 (15 Mar.) Death of Romanus II: accession of Basil II: regency of Theophano.
 (16 Aug.) Usurpation of Nicephorus II Phocas.
 964 *Novel* against the monks.
 965 Conquest of Cilicia.
 967 Renewal of the Bulgarian war.
 968 The Russians in Bulgaria.

- 969 (28 Oct.) Capture of Antioch.
The Fātimid Caliphs annex Egypt.
(10 Dec.) Murder of Nicephorus Phocas and accession of John Tzimisce.
- 970 Capture of Aleppo.
Accession of Géza as Prince of the Magyars.
- 971 Revolt of Bardas Phocas.
The Emperor John Tzimisce annexes Eastern Bulgaria.
- 972 Death of Svyatoslav of Kiev.
- 976 (10 Jan.) Death of John Tzimisce: personal rule of Basil II Bulgarianus begins.
Peter Orseolo I elected Doge.
- 976-979 Revolt of Bardas Sclerus.
- 980 Accession of Vladímir in Russia.
- 985 Fall of the eunuch Basil.
- 986-1018 Great Bulgarian War.
- 987-989 Conspiracy of Phocas and Sclerus.
- 988 The Fātimid Caliphs occupy Syria.
- 989 Baptism of Vladímir of Russia.
Vladímir captures Cherson.
- 991 The Fātimids re-occupy Syria.
- 991-1009 Reign of Peter Orseolo II as Doge.
- 992 (19 July) First Venetian treaty with the Eastern Empire.
- 994 Saif-ad-Daulah takes Aleppo and establishes himself in Northern Syria.
- 994-1001 War with the Fātimids.
- 995 Basil II's campaign in Syria.
- 996 (Jan.) *Novel* against the Powerful.
Defeat of the Bulgarians on the Spercheus.
- 997 Accession of St Stephen in Hungary, and conversion of the Magyars.
- 998-1030 Reign of Mahmūd of Ghaznah.
- 1006 Vladímir of Russia makes a treaty with the Bulgarians.
- 1009 The Patriarch Sergius erases the Pope's name from the diptychs.
- 1014 Battle of Cimbalongu; death of the Tsar Samuel.
- 1015 Death of Vladímir of Russia.
- 1018-1186 Bulgaria a Byzantine province.
- 1021-1022 Annexation of Vaspurakan to the Empire.
- 1024 The Patriarch Eustathius attempts to obtain from the Pope the autonomy of the Greek Church.
- 1025 (15 Dec.) Death of Basil II and accession of Constantine VIII.
- 1026 Fall of the Orseoli at Venice.
- 1028 (11 Nov.) Death of Constantine VIII and succession of Zoë and Romanus III Argyrus.
- 1030 Defeat of the Greeks near Aleppo.
- 1031 Capture of Edessa by George Maniaces.
- 1034 (12 April) Murder of Romanus III and accession of Michael IV the Paphlagonian.
Government of John the Orphanotrophos.
- 1038 Death of St Stephen of Hungary.
Success of George Maniaces in Sicily.
The Seljūq Tughril Beg proclaimed.
- 1041 (10 Dec.) Death of Michael IV and succession of Michael V Calaphates.
Banishment of John the Orphanotrophos.
- 1042 (21 April) Revolution in Constantinople; fall of Michael V.
Zoë and Theodora joint Empresses.
(11-12 June) Zoë's marriage; accession of her husband, Constantine IX Monomachus.
- 1043 Michael Cerularius becomes Patriarch.
Rising of George Maniaces; his defeat and death at Ostrovo.
- 1045 Foundation of the Law School of Constantinople.
- 1046 Annexation of Armenia (Ani) to the Empire.
- 1047 Revolt of Tornicius.

- 1048 Appearance of the Seljūqs on the eastern frontier of the Empire.
- 1050 Death of the Empress Zoë.
- 1054 (20 July) The Patriarch Michael Cerularius breaks with Rome; schism between the Eastern and Western Churches.
- 1055 (11 Jan.) Death of Constantine IX; Theodora sole Empress.
The Seljūq Tughril Beg enters Baghdad.
- 1056 (31 Aug.) Death of Theodora and proclamation of Michael VI Stratioticus.
- 1057 Revolt of Isaac Comnenus. Deposition of Michael VI.
(1 Sept. ?) Isaac I Comnenus crowned Emperor at Constantinople.
- 1058 Deposition and death of Michael Cerularius.
- 1059 Treaty of Melfi.
Abdication of Isaac Comnenus.
- 1059–1067 Reign of Constantine X Ducas.
- 1063 Death of Tughril Beg.
- 1063–1072 Reign of the Seljūq Alp Arslān.
- 1064 Capture of Ani by the Seljūqs, and conquest of Greater Armenia.
- 1066 Foundation of the Nizāmiyah University at Baghdad.
- 1067–1071 Reign of Romanus III Diogenes.
- 1071 Capture of Bari by the Normans and loss of Italy.
Battle of Manzikert.
The Seljūqs occupy Jerusalem.
- 1071–1078 Reign of Michael VII Parapinaces Ducas.
- 1072–1092 Reign of the Seljūq Malik Shāh.
- 1077 Accession of Sulaimān I, Sultan of Rūm.
- 1078 The Turks at Nicaea.
- 1078–1081 Reign of Nicephorus III Botaniates.
- 1080 Alliance between Robert Guiscard and Pope Gregory VII.
Foundation of the Armeno-Cilician kingdom.
- 1081–1118 Reign of Alexius I Comnenus.
- 1081–1084 Robert Guiscard's invasion of Epirus.
- 1082 Treaty with Venice.
- 1086 Incursions of the Patzinaks begin.
- 1091 (29 April) Defeat of the Patzinaks at the river Leburnium.
- 1094–1095 Invasion of the Cumans.
- 1094 Council of Piacenza.
- 1095 (18–28 Nov.) Council of Clermont proclaims the First Crusade.
- 1096 The Crusaders at Constantinople.
- 1097 The Crusaders capture Nicaea.
- 1098 Council of Bari. St Anselm refutes the Greeks.
- 1099 Establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.
- 1100 (18 July) Death of Godfrey of Bouillon.
- 1104 Defeat of the Crusaders at Harrān.
- 1107 Bohemond's expedition against Constantinople.
- 1108 Battle of Durazzo.
Treaty with Bohemond.
- 1116 Battle of Philomelium.
- 1118–1143 Reign of John II Comnenus.
- 1119 First expedition of John Comnenus to Asia Minor.
- 1122 Defeat of the Patzinaks near Eski-Sagra.
- 1122–1126 War with Venice.
- 1128 The Emperor John Comnenus defeats the Hungarians near Haram.
- 1137 (May) Roger II of Sicily's fleet defeated off Trani.
- 1137–1138 Campaign of John Comnenus in Cilicia and Syria.
- 1143–1180 Reign of Manuel I Comnenus.
- 1147–1149 The Second Crusade.
- 1147–1149 War with Roger II of Sicily.
- 1151 The Byzantines at Ancona.
- 1152–1154 Hungarian War.
- 1154 Death of Roger II of Sicily.

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- 1158 Campaign of Manuel Comnenus in Syria.
 - 1159 His solemn entry into Antioch; zenith of his power.
 - 1163 Expulsion of the Greeks from Cilicia.
 - 1164 Battle of H̄arim.
 - 1168 Annexation of Dalmatia.
 - 1170 The Emperor Manuel attempts to re-unite the Greek and Armenian Churches.
 - 1171 Rupture of Manuel with Venice.
 - 1173 Frederick Barbarossa besieges Ancona.
 - 1176 Battle of Myriocephalum.
 - Battle of Legnano.
 - 1177 Peace of Venice.
 - 1180-1183 Reign of Alexius II Comnenus.
 - 1180 Foundation of the Serbian monarchy by Stephen Nemanja.
 - 1182 Massacre of Latins in Constantinople.
 - 1183 (Sept.) Andronicus I Comnenus becomes joint Emperor.
 - (Nov.) Murder of Alexius II.
 - 1185 The Normans take Thessalonica.
 - Deposition and death of Andronicus; accession of Isaac II Angelus.
 - 1185-1219 Reign of Leo II the Great of Cilicia.
 - 1186 Second Bulgarian Empire founded.
 - 1187 Saladin captures Jerusalem.
 - 1189 Sack of Thessalonica.
 - 1189-1192 Third Crusade.
 - 1190 Death of Frederick Barbarossa in the East.
 - Isaac Angelus defeated by the Bulgarians.
 - 1191 Occupation of Cyprus by Richard Coeur-de-Lion.
 - 1192 Guy de Lusignan purchases Cyprus from Richard I.
 - 1193-1205 Reign of the Doge Enrico Dandolo.
 - 1195 Deposition of Isaac II; accession of Alexius III Angelus.
 - 1197-1207 The Bulgarian Tsar Johannitsa (Kalojan).
 - 1201 (April) Fourth Crusade. The Crusaders' treaty with Venice.
 - (May) Boniface of Montferrat elected leader of the Crusade.
 - 1203 (17 July) The Crusaders enter Constantinople.
 - Deposition of Alexius III; restoration of Isaac II with Alexius IV Angelus.
 - 1203-1227 Empire of Jenghiz Khan.
 - 1204 (8 Feb.) Deposition of Isaac II and Alexius IV; accession of Alexius V Ducas (Mourtzouphlos).
 - (13 April) Sack of Constantinople.
 - (16 May) Coronation of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, and foundation of the Latin Empire of Constantinople.
 - The compulsory union of the Eastern and Western Churches.
 - The Venetians purchase the island of Crete.
 - Alexius Comnenus founds the state of Trebizond.
 - 1205 (14 April) The Bulgarians defeat the Emperor Baldwin I at Hadrianople.
 - 1206 (21 Aug.) Henry of Flanders crowned Latin Emperor of Constantinople.
 - Theodore I Lascaris crowned Emperor of Nicaea.
 - 1208 Peace with the Bulgarians.
 - 1210 The Turks of Rūm defeated on the Maeander by Theodore Lascaris.
 - 1212 Peace with Nicaea.
 - 1215 The Fourth Lateran Council.
 - 1216 Death of the Emperor Henry, and succession of Peter of Courtenay.
 - 1217 Stephen crowned King of Serbia.
 - 1218 Death of Geoffrey of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia.
 - 1219 Creation of a separate Serbian Church.
 - 1221-1228 Reign of Robert of Courtenay, Latin Emperor of Constantinople.
 - 1222 Recovery of Thessalonica by the Greeks of Epirus.
 - Death of Theodore Lascaris, Emperor of Nicaea. Accession of John III Vatatzes.

- 1222 First appearance of the Mongols in Europe.
 1224 The Emperor of Nicaea occupies Hadrianople.
 1228 Death of Stephen, the first King of Serbia.
 1228-1237 Reign of John of Brienne, Latin Emperor of Constantinople.
 1230 Destruction of the Greek Empire of Thessalonica by the Bulgarians.
 1234 Fall of the Kin Dynasty in China.
 1235 Revival of the Bulgarian Patriarchate.
 1236 Constantinople attacked by the Greeks and Bulgarians.
 1236 (?) Alliance between the Armenians and the Mongols.
 1237 Invasion of Europe by the Mongols.
 1237-1261 Reign of Baldwin II, last Latin Emperor of Constantinople.
 1241 Battles of Liegnitz and Mohi.
 Death of John Asen II; the decline of Bulgaria begins.
 1244 The Despotat of Thessalonica becomes a vassal of Nicaea.
 1245 Council of Lyons.
 1246 Reconquest of Macedonia from the Bulgarians.
 1254 (30 Oct.) Death of John Vatatzes; Theodore II Lascaris succeeds as Emperor of Nicaea.
 Submission of the Despot of Epirus to Nicaea.
 Mamlūk Sultans in Egypt.
 1255-1256 Theodore II's Bulgarian campaigns.
 1256 Overthrow of the Assassins by the Mongols.
 1258 Death of Theodore II Lascaris. Accession of John IV Lascaris.
 Destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols and overthrow of the Caliphate.
 1259 (1 Jan.) Michael VIII Palaeologus proclaimed Emperor of Nicaea.
 1259-1294 Reign of Kublai Khan.
 1260 The Egyptians defeat the Mongols at 'Ain Jalūt.
 1261 (25 July) Capture of Constantinople by the Greeks; end of the Latin Empire.
 1261-1530 Abbasid Caliphate in Cairo.
 1266 (Feb.) Charles of Anjou's victory over Manfred at Benevento.
 1267 (27 May) Treaty of Viterbo.
 1267-1272 Progress of Charles of Anjou in Epirus.
 1270 (25 Aug.) Death of St Louis.
 1274 Ecumenical Council at Lyons; union of the Churches again achieved.
 1276 Leo III of Cilicia defeats the Mamlūks.
 1278 Leo III of Cilicia defeats the Seljūqs of Iconium.
 1281 Joint Mongol and Armenian forces defeated by the Mamlūks on the Orontes.
 (18 Nov.) Excommunication of Michael Palaeologus; breach of the Union.
 Victory of the Berat over the Angevins.
 1282 (30 May) The Sicilian Vespers.
 (11 Dec.) Death of Michael Palaeologus. Accession of Andronicus II.
 c. 1290 Foundation of Wallachia.
 1291 Fall of Acre.
 1299 Osmān, Emir of the Ottoman Turks.
 1302 Osmān's victory at Baphaeum.
 End of the alliance between the Armenians and the Mongols.
 1302-1311 The Catalan Grand Company in the East.
 1308 Turks enter Europe.
 Capture of Ephesus by the Turks.
 1309 Capture of Rhodes from the Turks by the Knights of St John.
 1311 Battle of the Cephissus.
 1326 Brūsa surrenders to the Ottoman Turks.
 (Nov.) Death of Osmān.
 1326-1359 Reign of Orkban.
 1328-1341 Reign of Andronicus III Palaeologus.
 1329 The Ottomans capture Nicaea.
 1330 (28 June) Defeat of the Bulgarians by the Serbians at the battle of Velbuzd.

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- 1331 (8 Sept.) Coronation of Stephen Dušan as King of Serbia.
 - 1336 Birth of Timūr.
 - 1337 The Ottomans capture Nicomedia.
Conquest of Cilicia by the Mamlūks.
 - 1341 Succession of John V Palaeologus. Rebellion of John Cantacuzene.
 - 1342-1344 Guy of Lusignan King of Cilicia.
 - 1342-1349 Revolution of the Zealots at Thessalonica.
 - 1344-1363 Reign of Constantine IV in Cilicia.
 - 1345 Stephen Dušan conquers Macedonia.
 - 1346 Stephen Dušan crowned Emperor of the Serbs and Greeks.
 - 1347 John VI Cantacuzene takes Constantinople.
 - 1348 Foundation of the Despotat of Mistra.
 - 1349 Independence of Moldavia.
 - 1350 Serbo-Greek treaty.
 - 1354 The Turks take Gallipoli.
 - 1355 Abdication of John VI Cantacuzene. Restoration of John V.
(20 Dec.) Death of Stephen Dušan.
 - 1356 The Turks begin to settle in Europe.
 - 1357 The Turks capture Hadrianople.
 - 1359-1389 Reign of Murād I.
 - 1360 Formation of the Janissaries from tribute-children.
 - 1363-1373 Reign of Constantine V in Cilicia.
 - 1365 The Turks establish their capital at Hadrianople.
 - 1368 Foundation of the Ming dynasty in China.
 - 1369 (21 Oct.) John V abjures the schism.
 - 1371 (26 Sept.) Battle of the Maritza.
Death of Stephen Uroš V.
 - 1373 The Emperor John V becomes the vassal of the Sultan Murād.
 - 1373-1393 Leo VI of Lusignan, the last King of Armenia.
 - 1375 Capture and exile of Leo VI of Armenia.
 - 1376-1379 Rebellion of Andronicus IV.
Coronation of Tvrtko as King of the Serbs and Bosnia.
 - 1379 Restoration of John V.
 - 1382 Death of Louis the Great of Hungary.
 - 1387 Turkish defeat on the Toplica.
Surrender of Thessalonica to the Turks.
 - 1389 (15 June) Battle of Kossovo; fall of the Serbian Empire.
 - 1389-1403 Reign of Bāyazīd.
 - 1390 Usurpation of John VII Palaeologus.
 - 1391 Death of John V. Accession of Manuel II Palaeologus.
(23 Mar.) Death of Tvrtko I.
Capture of Philadelphia by the Turks.
 - 1393 Turkish conquest of Thessaly.
(17 July) Capture of Trnovo; end of the Bulgarian Empire.
 - 1394 (10 Oct.) Turkish victory at Rovine in Wallachia.
 - 1396 (25 Sept.) Battle of Nicopolis.
 - 1397 Bāyazīd attacks Constantinople.
 - 1398 The Turks invade Bosnia.
Timūr invades India and sacks Delhi.
 - 1401 Timūr sacks Baghdad.
 - 1402 (28 July) Timūr defeats the Ottoman Sultan Bāyazīd at Angora.
 - 1402-1413 Civil war among the Ottoman Turks.
 - 1403 (21 Nov.) Second battle of Kossovo.
 - 1405 Death of Timūr.
 - 1409 Council of Pisa.
 - 1413-1421 Reign of Mahomet I.
 - 1413 (10 July) Turkish victory at Chamorlū.
 - 1416 The Turks declare war on Venice.
(29 May) Turkish fleet defeated off Gallipoli.
 - 1418 Death of Mircea the Great of Wallachia.

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- 1421-1451 Reign of Murād II.
1422 Siege of Constantinople by the Turks.
1423 Turkish expedition into the Morea.
Thessalonica purchased by Venice.
1423-1448 Reign of John VIII Palaeologus.
1426 Battle of Chirokoitia.
1430 Capture of Thessalonica by the Turks.
1431 Council of Basle opens.
1432 Death of the last Frankish Prince of Achaia.
1438 (9 April) Opening of the Council of Ferrara.
1439 (10 Jan.) The Council of Ferrara removed to Florence.
(6 July) The Union of Florence.
Completion of the Turkish conquest of Serbia.
1440 The Turks besiege Belgrade.
1441 John Hunyadi appointed *voivode* of Transylvania.
1443-1468 Skanderbeg's war of independence against the Turks.
1444 (July) Peace of Szegedin.
(10 Nov.) Battle of Varna.
1446 Turkish invasion of the Morea.
1448 (17 Oct.) Third battle of Kossovo. Accession of Constantine XI Palaeologus.
1451 Accession of Mahomet II.
1453 (29 May) Capture of Constantinople by the Turks.
1456 The Turks again besiege Belgrade.
1457 Stephen the Great succeeds in Moldavia.
1458 The Turks capture Athens.
1459 Final end of medieval Serbia.
1461 Turkish conquest of Trebizond.
1462-1479 War between Venice and the Turks.
1463 Turkish conquest of Bosnia.
1468 Turkish conquest of Albania.
1475 Stephen the Great of Moldavia defeats the Turks at Racova.
1479 Venice cedes Scutari to the Turks.
1484 The Montenegrin capital transferred to Cetinje.
1489 Venice acquires Cyprus.
1499 Renewal of Turco-Venetian War.
1517 Conquest of Egypt by the Turks.
1523 Conquest of Rhodes by the Turks.
1537-1540 Third Turco-Venetian War.
1571 Conquest of Cyprus from Venice by the Turks.